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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 80
By Wilder

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Durell Roberts, Assistant
Commissioner of Tourist Development.

WHEREAS, it was with deep regret that the members of the Tennessee General
Assembly and the citizens of our state learned of the death of Durell Roberts, Assistant
Commissioner of the Department of Tourist Development; and

WHEREAS, Commissioner Roberts graduated from Celina High School and attended
the University of Tennessee and Tennessee Tech; and

WHEREAS, he worked for the Department of Tourist Development for more than 30
years with extraordinary expertise, diligence and dedication. He began his distinguished
service with the department in 1964 taking a very informative traveling mobile exhibit on
Tennessee across the nation, a well-done exhibit which did an excellent job in promoting
Tennessee tourism; and

WHEREAS, Commissioner Roberts served in many capacities with the department as it
evolved into a cabinet-level department and had served admirably as assistant commissioner
since 1993. In each position he held, he was widely praised for his solid record of
accomplishment; and

WHEREAS, most recently, Assistant Commissioner Durell Roberts had the important
job of directing the state's 13 welcome centers with a staff of 124 employees. The tremendous
success of this program made our state a model which other states sought to emulate; and

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WHEREAS, his role as a career state employee and his direction of the welcome centers ensured continuity and expertise in the management of the centers throughout the state; and

WHEREAS, Durell Roberts was honored numerous times for his admirable record of accomplishment, a record that ultimately meant many more jobs for Tennessee and greater prosperity for our state; and

WHEREAS, Commissioner Roberts received an award of appreciation for “generous contributions and support to the Northeast Tennessee Tourism Region” in 1994, the American and Canadian Sport Travel & Outdoor Show presented him with an award for “Most Attractive Multiple Booth Exhibit in Vacation/Travel Category” also in 1994, and in 1995 he received the prestigious International Association of Travel Exhibitors (IATE) “Tourism Professional of the Year” award; and

WHEREAS, John Wade, Commissioner of Tourist Development, paid tribute to Durell Roberts by stating: “Durell Roberts and I have been close friends for over 14 years. I always considered him more of a friend than an employee. He was a conscientious, hard worker, who ran one of the best welcome center programs in the United States. I will remember Durell for his common sense approach to all situations, but I will remember him most for his loyalty to me, his family and co-workers. I will miss him as long as I live.”; and

WHEREAS, Agnes Gorham, East Tennessee Area Director, Heritage and Community Tourism Development Division of the Tennessee Department of Tourist Development said: “Durell Roberts was the rock on which the Tennessee Department of Tourist Development was built. The entire Tennessee tourism industry will miss his common sense and gentle guidance. I think it is fair to say that the success of tourism in Tennessee’s economy is due in part to Durell’s dedicated supervision of the development and operation of Tennessee Welcome Centers and the Tennessee travel show exhibits. He was the stabilizer for the Department’s staff. He was a best friend and we’re missing him terribly.”; and

WHEREAS, Leon Downey, Executive Director of the Pigeon Forge Department of Tourism said: "Those of us who have known Durell for many years were stunned by his untimely passing. He was a great asset to the entire Tennessee tourism industry and will be greatly missed."; and

WHEREAS, "Durell Roberts leaves a big void in the Tennessee tourism industry," Jane Rader, Executive Director of the Sevierville Chamber of Commerce stated, "His professionalism and friendship will certainly be missed."; and

WHEREAS, Pauline Prosser, Regional Director of the Middle East Tennessee Tourism Council commented: "I worked with Durell at the Department of Tourist Development for seven years in the 1980s, a period of growth and development of the state's travel industry. He represented, for me, the critical beginnings of the state's tourism functions by working with Wilbert Hogan, or 'Junebug,' in an office to promote recreational and other tourism interests in what was then the equivalent of the state's parks and recreation department."; and

WHEREAS, as Ms. Prosser further stated: "Years later when the department of tourist development entered the international promotional arena and was becoming somewhat more sophisticated, Durell could keep things realistic and close to the Tennessee homefront by one comment or word. He never forgot that he was from Celina, Tennessee, which gave him an understanding that tourism was important to every area of the state, rural and urban alike. Along with everyone, I learned a lot from Durell and will miss him very much."; and

WHEREAS, from Joe Waggoner, Executive Vice President and General Manager of Gatlinburg's Christus Gardens came these thoughts: "It's a real shame to lose someone who had been with the Department of Tourist Development for the amount of time that Durell had. His knowledge and expertise in overseeing the Welcome Centers has been a tremendous boost to tourism in our area. I never met anyone who did not think that he was a very fine fellow."; and

WHEREAS, "Knowing that he was looking forward to having some time of his own after retirement, gives me cause to reflect on the fact that we should all stop and take time to smell the roses," Waggoner added; and

WHEREAS, "I personally remember the first time that I met Durell was in Sweetwater, Tennessee at an East Tennessee Tourism Council meeting. That was several years ago and, since that time, no matter where I saw him, he always had a smile, a compliment and a hug for me. He was one of those very special people that everyone considered it a joy to be acquainted with."; and

WHEREAS, "His leadership and friendship will be remembered and missed throughout the Tennessee tourism industry," said Mary Bob Rowe; and

WHEREAS, Commissioner Roberts was a loving father to daughter Kim Roberts, brother to sisters Maxine Roberts and Betty Faye Lewis, and to his brother Ralph Roberts; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that we pause to honor the memory of Durell Roberts and reflect on his exemplary life of public service; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE-HUNDREDTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, That we honor the memory of Assistant Commissioner Durell Roberts and express our deepest condolences to his family and friends.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That appropriate copies of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copies.